



FOOD ECONOMY CASE STUDY: ETHIOPIA

HOW FOOD ECONOMY ANALYSIS HELPS TARGET FOOD AID

The Context:

Although Tigreans are known as 'agriculturalists', chronically low levels of crop production mean that poor households often purchase half of their annual food needs. In Eastern Tigray zone the relative importance of crop production and purchased grain to a poor household is largely determined by geography. The northern part of the zone is more arid, levels of crop production are lower than further south and northern households typically meet their food needs through working in Eritrea, and purchasing grain. The closure of the border due to the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in late 1997 seriously curtailed this means of acquiring food.

Analysis of the simultaneous effect of the border closure and of a failed harvest revealed that the northern areas were in fact facing the most severe food shortage - not the southern areas, where crop failure was more serious. The importance of the Eritrean labor market and the limited alternative sources of income for northern areas made them the priority for emergency assistance.

Food economy analysis illuminates the mechanisms households employ to access food, enabling the effects of multiple 'shocks', such as drought and border closure, to be deciphered for different areas and facilitating improved geographic targeting of emergency interventions.

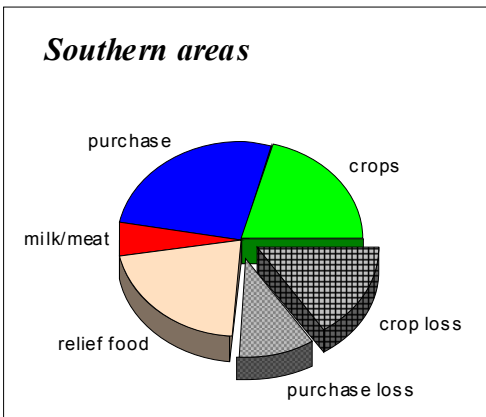
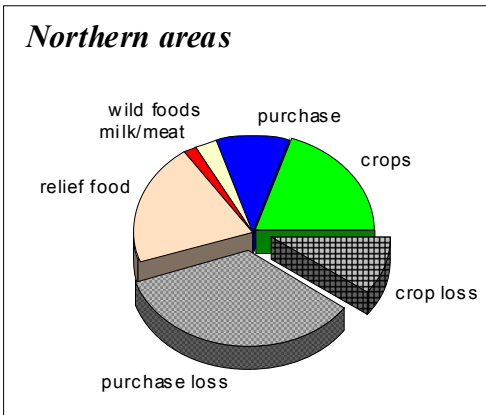
The pattern of harvest failure in 1998 suggested...

that relief needs would be greatest in the southern part of the East Tigray Zone of Ethiopia

But food economy analysis showed that:

the closure of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border due to conflict, and the consequent loss of access to the Eritrean labor market, was likely to be as great a shock to the local economy as the drought, actually resulting in higher relief needs in the north than the south.

Even though southern areas lost a higher proportion of crop production, northern areas faced a higher deficit due to loss in migratory income.



*The pie represents 100% of annual food needs for a typical family
Source: Save the Children Fund-UK*